

Message Text

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POUCHED AS INFO TO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, CA

SUBJ: NATO SEC GEN LUNS COMMENTS RE CANADIAN DEFENSE

POSTURE RECEIVE PRESS ATTENTION

1. NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JOSEPH LUNS' ALLEGED COMMENTS CRITICIZING CANADA'S EUROPEAN DEFENSE ROLE HAVE RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION IN CANADA. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, DURING THE NOV 8-9 WEEKEND IN A MEETING WITH CANADIAN REPORTERS, LUNS DESCRIBED CANADA'S FORCES IN EUROPE AS "SPLENDED, BUT NOT WELL-EQUIPPED" AND HE IS SAID TO HAVE TOLD THEM THAT "IT IS A MYSTERY WHY A COUNTRY SO BIG AND SO KEENLY AWARE OF ITS IDENTITY AS CANADA, SO WHOLLY DEPENDS UPON THE US FOR ITS DEFENSE." HE FURTHER MAINTAINED THAT THE NETHERLANDS IS A BIG MILITARY POWER COMPARED TO CANADA AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ACTION WILL SOON BE TAKEN TO MODERNIZE CANADIAN FORCES IN WESTERN EUROPE.

2. THE PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT CANADIAN NATO REPRESENTATIVE R. R. MENZIES RESPONDED TO THE CHARGES BY SAYING THAT CANADA'S CF-104'S ARE NOT OBSOLETE, THAT THE CENTURION TANKS ARE GOOD FOR ANOTHER COUPLE OF YEARS,
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THAT LUNS UNDERESTIMATED CANADA'S NATO CONTRIBUTION

AND THAT CANADA'S THREE-YEAR VOLUNTEERS IN FULL STRENGTH UNITS CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN OTHER EUROPEAN UNITS MANNED AT HALF-STRENGTH BY 12-MONTH CONSCRIPTS. ALSO, FONMIN ALLAN MACEACHEN HAS SAID, ABOUT LUNS' STATEMENT, "I DON'T THINK MUCH OF IT," AND DEFMIN RICHARDSON WAS STUNG TO DEFEND CANADA'S PRESENT ROLE IN NATO. MEANWHILE, BOTH TORONTO GLOBE & MAIL AND OTTAWA CITIZEN PUBLISHED SIMILAR EDITORIALS, WHICH DECRIED CONTINUING DELAYS IN REACHING DEFENSE REVIEW DECISIONS, AND URGED PROMPT ACTION: "ARM OUR TROOPS OR QUIT NATO" THE CITIZEN ENTITLED ITS EDITORIAL. GLOBE & MAIL SAID, "THERE HAS BEEN TALK, TALK, TALK, BUT LITTLE ELSE...OUR RULERS CANNOT MAKE UP THEIR MINDS."

3. COMMENT: WHILE LUNS' COMMENTS ADD NOTHING NEW, THEY DO APPEAR INAPPROPRIATELY TIMED SINCE CANADA'S LONG AWAITED DEFENSE STRUCTURE REVIEW IS FINALLY ON ITS WAY TO THE CABINET FOR FINAL APPROVAL. FOLLOWING SECDEF SCHLESINGER'S VISIT IN SEPTEMBER, RUMORS HAVE INDICATED THAT REVIEW WILL CONCLUDE THAT FORCES SHOULD HAVE SOME NEW EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING TANKS AND LONG-RANGE PATROL AIRCRAFT, WITH THE PURCHASE OF INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT POSTPONED AND CF-5'S NOW IN STORAGE ASSIGNED TO EUROPE AS A STOP-GAP MEASURE.

5. ON NOVEMBER 12, PHASE 2 OF THE DEFENSE STRUCTURE REVIEW WENT BEFORE THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON PRIORITIES AND PLANS. THIS COMMITTEE IS CHAIRED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND CONSISTS OF MOST OF THE CABINET HEAVYWEIGHTS (E.G. FINANCE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS). ALTHOUGH FULL CABINET APPROVAL IS REQUIRED OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS, THAT APPROVAL IS VIRTUALLY A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. IT IS THEREFORE TO BE HOPED THAT THE LUNS COMMENTS, COMING ON THE EVE OF THE COMMITTEE'S DEFENSE REVIEW MEETING, WILL NOT HAVE GENERATED SO MUCH PIQUE AS TO STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF THOSE, PRINCIPALLY FINANCE MINISTER MACDONALD, OPPOSED TO INCREASING DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AT THE VERY MOMENT WHEN THE GOC IS ASKING THE CANADIAN PUBLIC TO TIGHTEN ITS BELT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S WAGE AND PRICE CONTROL

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